



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Oct. 15, 2012

For More Information, Contact:
Micki Savelkoul
Division of Injury Prevention and Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4580
E-mail: mlsavelkoul@nd.gov

Suicide Prevention Education Programs Launched in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is launching several statewide suicide prevention education programs. Suicide was the ninth leading cause of death for North Dakotan's in 2011, and was the second leading cause of death for North Dakotan's between the ages of 10 and 24.

Fifty-one of the suicides occurred in people between the ages of 45 to 64, following the national increase in these ages. In 2011, 114 people died by suicide in North Dakota. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 77 percent of individuals who died by suicide had visited their primary care doctor within the last year. Of those, 45 percent had visited their primary care doctor within the last month. The question of suicide was seldom raised.

"It's hard to talk about suicide," says Micki Savelkoul, Suicide Prevention Program director, "but it's harder to talk about it when you don't know what to say or how to say it. That is why there is so much focus on education about how to talk about suicide. It's never going to be a comfortable subject to talk about, but having facts and education makes it easier."

In order to educate about suicide prevention, the Department of Health is launching the following programs:

- The Department of Health has granted funds to the University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health to help promote a program called Kognito-at risk in the ED. The program is a free, online, avatar-based suicide training that is developed for doctors, nurses, and social workers in emergency rooms. The training focuses on how to talk to patients about suicide, what are pertinent questions to know, what screening tools are beneficial, and how to document the conversations about suicide within a patient's chart. Continuing education is available for doctors, nurses and social workers. To enroll in the training visit www.kognitocampus.com/ed/nd/ or contact Shawnda Schroeder at 701.777.0787 or Shawnda.schroeder@med.und.edu.

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Minot State University Center for People with Disabilities has also been awarded a grant to promote another online program called Kognito-at risk for high school educators. This new program is a free, online avatar-based training and is developed specifically for high school staff. The training provides education on how to talk to youth about suicide and provides instant feedback based on the educators comments to the student at risk. Schools are eligible to earn a set of achievement certificates based on staff participation. To enroll in the training, visit <https://highschool.kognito.com/nd> or contact Brent Askvig at 701.858.3052 or brent.askvig@minotstateu.edu.

“It’s exciting to see an advancement in programs aimed at preventing suicides,” says Savelkoul. “Because suicide can cross into many different demographics, it’s important that training is also available for many different groups. Everyone can have a role in suicide prevention and having multiple suicide prevention programs out there facilitates the different roles people can play.”

For more information about these programs and other suicide prevention programs and activities, contact Micki Savelkoul, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4580.

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